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FM AMEMBASSY CHISINAU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6778
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
XMT AMEMBASSY MINSK

UNCLAS CHISINAU 000625

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/UMB, DRL/AE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: LEFT-BANK COMMUNIST PARTY MOUNTS NEW PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS
IN TRANSNISTRIA

Sensitive but Unclassified. Please Protect Accordingly.

1. (SBU) Summary: The Pridnestrovie (Transnistria) Communist Party is facing opposition from Transnistrian authorities in its attempts to demonstrate in favor of the dismissal of Transnistrian "President" Smirnov and the holding of new elections. While Transnistrian demonstrators have mustered in the hundreds several times since April in Benderi, authorities in Dubasari have prevented protests. End Summary.

2. (SBU) The June 7 rally in Benderi, the region's second largest city, attracted several hundred demonstrators. The protesters reiterated their previous demands for the dismissal of Smirnov and the Cabinet, dissolution of the Supreme Soviet, and organization of early elections. The participants also protested against price rises and increasing poverty. (Note: From January through May of this year, Transnistria has suffered an inflation rate of 17.9%. Yearly inflation in 2007 was 29.4%. End note.) Pridnestrovie Communist Party leader Oleg Horjan declared that his Communist Party (not to be confused with Vladimir Gavrilchenko's more conservative Communist Party of Pridnestrovie) would start collecting signatures in support of Smirnov's dismissal, if authorities did not respond to their demands. Oleg Gudymo, member of the Supreme Soviet, leader of the Patriotic Party of Transnistria, and former KGB officer, also attended the demonstration. In his speech Gudymo tried to shift the focus from internal causes of the economic crisis to external pressure on Transnistria, but was booed off the stage by the crowd.

3. (SBU) In Dubasari, the head of the raion (county) administration, Igor Mazur, is known as a hard-liner who does not tolerate dissent, and has consistently impeded efforts to organize demonstrations. Pridnestrovie Communist Party activists, including a member of the Dubasari Raion Council, have been arrested twice when distributing leaflets announcing a demonstration, and charged with illegal distribution of printed materials. (Note: In a possible sign of increasing judicial independence in one part of Transnistria, the Dubasari raion court acquitted the arrestees on June 6. End note.)

4. (SBU) Comment: These demonstrations show a slow crumbling of Transnistria's previously monolithic, Soviet-style governmental administration. Horjan's consistent opposition to Smirnov's administration is showing some results. While the authorities ignore his demands, they are not completely successful in thwarting his efforts. End comment.

Kirby